Incorporating Positive Youth Development into Your Prevention Program

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Overview

❖ **Positive Youth Development Framework**

   (Definition, Research, Examples)

❖ **Components of Effective PYD Programs**

❖ **Real Ways to Apply the PYD Framework**

❖ **Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships**

❖ **Reflections and Questions**

Definition

❖ **Definitions for positive (or healthy) youth development vary, but today we will use:**

> **"The deliberate process of providing ALL youth with the support, *relationships*, experiences, resources and *opportunities* needed to reach their *full* potential."[1]**

Positive Youth Development...

❖ **Emphasizes the many positive attributes of youth and focuses on developing inherent strengths and assets to promote healthy behavior.**

❖ **"Problem-free is not fully prepared and fully prepared is not fully engaged"[2]**

❖ **Requires mobilizing multiple stakeholders including young people, prevention professionals, educators, parents, healthcare workers, etc.**

What the Research Says…

❖ **It Works!**

❖ **National organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs all recommend using positive youth development framework in working with youth.**

❖ **See research/reference list.**

Examples of Positive Youth Development Approaches

- **40 Developmental Assets ® (Search Institute and Benson)** www.buildassets.org OR www.search-institute.org

- **Risk and Protective Factors (Hawkins and Catalano)** http://guide.helpingamericasyouth.gov/programtool-factors.cfm

- **Resiliency (Werner and Smith)** www.resiliency.com/index.htm

- **America's Promise (Colin Powell/President's Summit)** www.americaspromise.org/APA.aspx

- **Colorado's Violence Prevention Advisory Group's Bold Steps!** http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/YVPP/StrategicPlan-BoldSteps.pdf

Principles of a PYD Framework

1. **Strengths-based** – **focus on positive health, education and civic engagement outcomes**

2. **Youth engagement** **and youth-adult partnerships**

3. **Addressing ALL youth vs. "youth-at-risk"**

4. **Community engagement, including families**

5. **Culturally responsive** – **People recognize and respond to variations in cultures, etc.**

6. **Collaboration**

Components of Effective PYD Programs[3]

1. Promote a sense of **safety**
2. Provide appropriate **structure**
3. Create **supportive relationships**
4. Provide opportunities to **belong**
5. Provide **positive social norms**, such as rules for behavior
6. Give youth responsibilities and **meaningful challenges**
7. Provide **opportunities** for skill-building; and
8. Coordinate **family, school and community** programming

Pre-Requisites for Utilizing a PYD Framework

❖ **Conviction and belief** **that youth are capable and can contribute**

❖ **Grounding** **in youth development principles and research**

Pre-Requisites for Utilizing a PYD Framework

We must change our paradigm[4] at both the individual and community levels:

FROM	TO
Problem-focused	*Strengths-based*
At-risk	*Resilient*
Punitive	*Educational and restorative*
Mainstreaming	*Culturally aware*
Dependence	*Responsibility*
Alienation	*Connectedness*

Real Ways to Apply a PYD Framework

1. Create <u>positive youth environments</u> that are safe, inclusive, affirming, supportive and accepting.

2. Build <u>trusting relationship with young people</u>[5]
   - ✓ Be self-aware and seek understanding
   - ✓ *Genuinely* respect youth and show that respect
   - ✓ Be authentic direct and *honest* with them
   - ✓ Listen – no more lectures and be sure to reflect back in an *authentic* way
   - ✓ Recognize cognitive development of adolescents; <u>Talk in a way they understand</u> (i.e. Break down into smaller steps)

A	→	B
B	→	C
C	→	D

Real Ways to Apply a PYD Framework

3. Provide _meaningful_ <u>opportunities and resources</u> for skill building

4. Empower young people to be <u>involved in decision-making</u> process – Develop strong youth-adult partnerships and make it "business as usual"

> **When programs targeting youth do not involve them in the development and decision-making process, they risk developing strategies that don't work and waste valuable resources.[6]**

So, how do we "walk the talk?"

The Youth Partnership for Health

❖ Dedicated to "helping our communities and other youth throughout the state and shaping our futures together"

❖ Energetic, diverse youth (14-18 years) from across Colorado who are enthusiastic about shaping how the state responds to important youth issues

❖ Help make decisions, provide insight and develop recommendations.

❖ Began in 2000 and continues because it has proven to be a successful model of engaging youth leadership in policy and program decision-making!
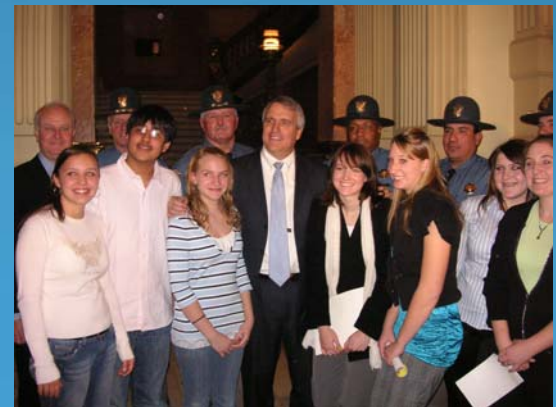
The Youth Partnership for Health

Youth-created DVD – "Nothing About Us Without Us"

Companion Guide – "Engage Youth! Colorado's Guide to Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships"

Will be available free-of-charge on September 15th!

So, what is Youth-Adult Partnership anyway?

- ❖ <u>Sharing</u> responsibility and power

- ❖ Making decisions *together*!
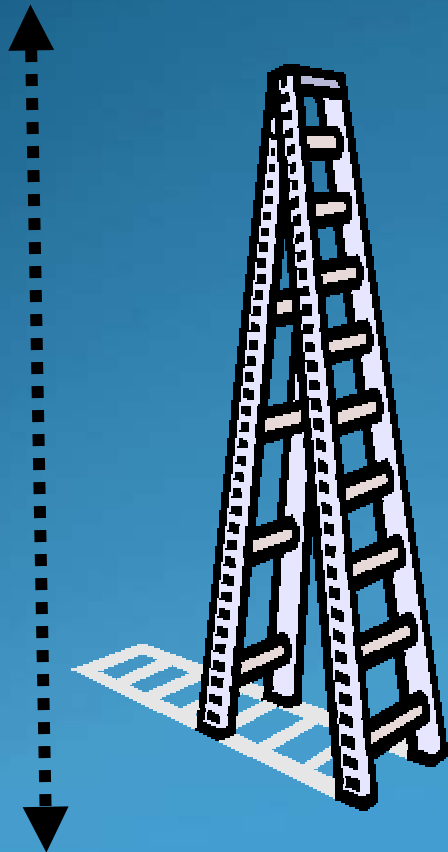
- ❖ Shift from working *for* youth to working *with* youth

Youth Programs
vs. Youth-Adult Partnerships

❖ A typical *youth program* is one-way commitment from adults to help youth.

❖ A *youth-adult partnership* is a two-way commitment where everyone benefits!

Ladder of Youth Participation[7]

Youth as Partners (Maximum Youth Involvement)

- Youth and adults initiate and direct actions together; Decision-making authority is shared
- Adults initiate actions, but share decisions with youth
- Youth are consulted and informed about actions
- Youth are informed about actions and assigned tasks
- Youth are decorations and/or tokens, where the organization creates a false appearance of including youth (I.e. they may be sitting at the table, but are not given the opportunity or power to provide input
- Youth are used solely to communicate adults' messages

Youth as Objects (Minimum Youth Involvement)

Benefits of Youth-Adult Partnerships[8]

Adults:	Organizations:	Youth have/develop:
View youth as critical to program success	Begin to expect youth input and get their mission clarified by youth	Increased self-esteem, sense of personal control and enhanced identity development
View youth as competent	Become more connected and responsive to youth	Greater development of life skills including leadership, public speaking and job responsibility
Become more committed to their organization	Place greater value on inclusiveness and representation	Greater communication in the family
Feel more effective and competent themselves	Become more active in the community	Decreased involvement in risky behaviors such as drug use
Develop a stronger sense of community	Become more appealing to potential funders	Better academic achievement

Challenges to Youth-Adult Partnerships

Partnerships of any type are challenging…

…youth-adult partnerships are <u>no</u> different.

Resist the "Yeah, but…" Syndrome!

Challenges and Recommendations to Building Youth-Adult Partnerships

Challenge	Recommendations to Overcoming the Challenge
Sharing Power	❖ *Take small steps* - adults may want to define specific responsibilities that they are *ready* to share; and, youth may want to take on a specific responsibility as they take their first steps in having power.
Stereotypes	❖ Focus on the strengths of each individual. ❖ Make sure there is time in the meetings to learn about each other and build relationships!
Changing Attitudes	❖ Participate in an orientation before joining a youth-adult partnership ❖ Take culturally responsiveness trainings to prepare for working with youth

Challenges and Recommendations to Building Youth-Adult Partnerships

Challenge	Recommendations to Overcoming the Challenge
Policies and Procedures	❖ Find out which policies are requirements and which are practices that can be changed ❖ If policies do create barriers, work with youth and other advocates to find out "lessons learned" so that you can help change them (or get over it and learn to work around them) ❖ Talk to the organization about developing more partnership-friendly policies!
Logistics	❖ Be prepared to "walk the talk." ❖ Make decisions with youth from the very beginning. ❖ Find out what times work best for the youth you hope to recruit. ❖ Identify a location with many transportation options or provide transportation for the youth. ❖ Ask youth what materials and equipment they need available to successfully participate as partners

Expectations of Adults and Youth

Both youth and adults have expectations. Be sure to discuss these openly and come to agreement on them.

- Be Authentic
- Change Your Paradigm
- Look Inward
- Open the Door to Communication
- Create Opportunities to Partner
- Outline Expectations and Commitments

- Spread the Word
- Reflect
- Be Patient
- *Don't Generalize*
- Accept and learn from Criticism
- Allow "No"
- *Take Time*

What You Can Do Right Now:

Something…*anything…*

…just take that first step!

1. Share this information with your supervisor or a colleague and brainstorm ways to involve young people
2. Invite a young person to your next meeting (assuming you have a meaningful role for them to play and they understand the expectations)
3. Bring up the idea of involving youth in planning, etc. at a staff or interagency meeting
4. Come visit the Youth Partnership for Health or call me for consultation or technical assistance

"Take Home" Messages

1. PYD Works!
2. We have to change our paradigm
3. Partner with young people and do it in a meaningful   way!
4. Adults, organizations and youth all benefit from   effective youth-adult partnerships.
5. Resist the "Yeah, but…" Syndrome!
6. Discuss roles and expectations from the very beginning
7. Be patient and persevere!
8. Take action and DO SOMETHING!

Reflections and Questions

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Endnotes

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2. Pittman, K. & Irby, M. (1996). Preventing Problems or Promoting Development? Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies Inc.

3. Nancy Leffert, Ph.D. et al., Making the Case: Measuring the impact of Youth Development Programs, Minneapolis: Search Institute, (1996).

4. National Association of Social Workers PIPPAH Packet – http://www.socialworkers.org/pippah/paradigm.asp

5. Adapted from Ken Ginsberg's model of "A Strengths-based Approach to Addressing Risk and can be found at www.aap.org/adolescenthiv/AHU0307.pdf

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Relevant Websites

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www.actforyouth.net

www.aap.org/stress/childcopehome.htm

www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/involvement.htm

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